

# *Mission of the Voice of the Poor*

The St. Vincent de Paul Society believes in the preferential option for the poor. We support Catholic social teaching and advocate for justice on behalf of the needy.

## **AREAS OF CONCERN:**

**We believe in the dignity of every person.**

### **Economic Rights**

We believe that every individual has a right to that which is necessary to sustain life. Income security, shelter, and sufficient food is vital for all. Rights of workers, just wages, right to participation in government, and a government sensitive to the common good of the people are among our concerns.

### **Education**

We believe that every child has a right to quality education.

### **Family Life**

We believe in the sacredness of the family. We advocate for the well being of children and all who are unable to speak for themselves.

### **Health Care**

We believe that all people have a right to quality health care and should have access to both prevention and treatment.

### **Housing**

We believe that all people have a right to affordable and safe housing.

### **Human and Civil Rights**

We believe in advocating for access to job training. We oppose unjust discrimination. We advocate for restorative justice in treating prisoners and former prisoners, especially juveniles. We are for abolition of the death penalty.



## **Society of St. Vincent de Paul**

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**Society of St. Vincent de Paul**

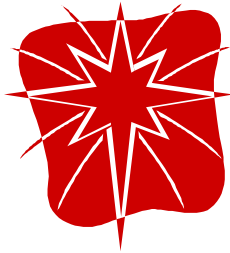
# VOICE OF THE POOR

Ask and you shall receive;  
seek and you shall find;  
knock and it shall be  
opened to you.

Luke 11:9



## Who We Are



The St. Vincent de Paul Society in San Mateo County is part of a national and international organization that seeks to maintain the dignity of every human person, most especially the poor, and to improve the quality of life of those in need according to basic gospel values. The Society in the San Francisco Archdiocese has continuously served the poor for more than 100 years. The Society's Patron is St. Vincent de Paul, hailed as the forerunner in the development of social services and the creation of an organized structure for assisting the needy. Frederic Ozanam, a lawyer and teacher at the Sorbonne University in Paris, founded the Society in 1833. Since then the Society has flourished with one million members worldwide. The Society has units, known as Conferences, in most Catholic parishes. There are 33 Conferences in San Mateo County with about 1,000 members who provide emergency assistance to the poor. Members provide food, clothing, rental help, PG&E, furniture, transportation aid, and other assistance. In San Mateo County a jail ministry program provides services to prisoners and former prisoners. No work of charity is foreign to the Society.

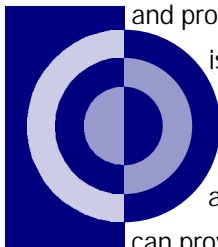
## PRINCIPLES OF THE SOCIETY

Love of God, true friendship, and service to the poor are the foundation of the Society.

1. Vincentians bear witness to the love of Christ through prayer, meditation on the scriptures and the teachings of the Church, through their daily lives and in their relationship with those in need.
2. "You have the poor with you always." (Matthew 26:11) The Vincentian is at their service, does not judge, and is available as time and resources permit.

## VOICE OF THE POOR

While members of the Society conduct home visits and provide emergency assistance, there is more that must be done to alleviate pain and hardship. Members know the poor first hand, yet they also realize that the service they can provide is limited when put in perspective with the real, ongoing needs of the individual and/or family. Long term and effective assistance leading to self sufficiency requires looking at the big social and economic picture. Thus the Voice of the Poor Committee was formed to address needs and to advocate for solutions. Effective advocacy requires careful research of the issues and their root causes. An organized process to promote change is essential.



## WHAT IS MEANT BY THE VOICE OF THE POOR?

The name, "Voice of the Poor," depicts the singular, "voice." To be effective and credible it is vital to speak in one united voice about the poor and the needs of the poor. The second part of the name, "of the poor" depicts solidarity with the poor. We stand side by side with those we serve. We are one with the poor because that is where we find Jesus. We are "of the poor."



## VOICE OF THE POOR COMMITTEE

Voice of the Poor is a standing committee of the District Council. The Committee recommends advocacy priorities and positions to the District Council and the board of directors. Action is determined by the nature of the issue.

## SERVING THE POOR IN SAN MATEO COUNTY

St. Vincent de Paul Society in San Mateo County serves approximately 35,000 persons annually. Of this total, close to 40% are children.

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